



AFT Connecticut  
AFT-CT-010

Healthcare  
Higher Education  
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Testimony of  
**Patti Fusco, President**  
**West Haven Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 1547**

**RE: H.B. 5489 An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform**  
**H.B. 5492 An Act Concerning Revisions to the Accountability Statutes**

**Education Committee Public Hearing**  
**March 15, 2010**

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Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischman and members of the Education Committee. Thank you the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Patti Fusco and I am President of the West Haven Federation of Teachers and School Nurses and Vice President for AFT Connecticut, which is a diverse union of 28,000 members.

I am here today to discuss H.B. 5489 An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform and H.B. 5492 An Act Concerning Revisions to the Accountability Statutes. While both bills would require overhauling high school graduation requirements, they take different approaches toward implementation, depending on whether the state is able to secure funding from the federal government.

AFT Connecticut supports the goal of high school reform. We want rigorous standards and a comprehensive curriculum to prepare our students for college and the workplace. However, we are concerned that without proper funding, this initiative will do more harm than good.

In order to employ such ambitious, systemic change in the way we educate high school students, adequate resources must be available. It's not just a matter of writing new curriculum and purchasing new textbooks. We need professional development resources to inform teachers about new content and how it is best delivered. We need effective, quality mentoring for those who may struggle. We need tutoring and remedial services for students who may have difficulty keeping up.

Similar legislation raising graduation requirements died last session when it became clear that the state was not going to be able to adequately fund the initiative.

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Unfortunately, the economic climate has not improved this year. Without federal funds, no Connecticut school district would be able to successfully adopt these measures.

H.B. 5492 would also require districts to conduct end-of-course exams in certain subjects. The language does not specify if a student must pass this exam in order to pass the course and/or graduate from high school. While AFT Connecticut does not have an official position regarding exit exams, we have a number of questions that we believe this Committee should take into consideration before implementing such a new concept in Connecticut:

- Which is more meaningful, an end-of-course or an end-of-grade exam?
- Will the exam be the only measure or will there be multiple measures?
- How will drop out rates be affected by exit exams?
- How much flexibility will be allowed in local districts?
- How will a new testing program fit with *No Child Left Behind*?
- How will the reliability and validity of tests be insured?
- What will be the level of rigor and relevancy?
- Will exit exams be aligned with school curricula?
- Will there be remediation, retesting and to what extent?
- Ultimately, what will be accomplished through the use of exit exams?

It's only when we answer these questions that I feel we will be ready to introduce end-of-course examinations.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.